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# THE CHURCH

IN

ITS RELATION TO THE STATE.

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An Address

FROM

THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

THIRD EDITION, REVISED.

“That we, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”—EPHESIANS iv. 15.

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# THE CHURCH

IN

## ITS RELATION TO THE STATE.



QUESTIONS of grave import in connection with this great subject are now, in various parts of the world, agitating the public mind. The propriety of "Church Establishments" is called in question. What such Establishments involve, what would be the result of the separation between the Church and the State—these are inquiries which are now urging themselves upon public attention. Let us approach them in a spirit of religious seriousness, yet with calmness and trust. There may be periods to which the language may be applicable, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." But the Christian knows that the foundation stands sure, and that whilst that which is transitory may be shaken, it is in order that that which cannot be shaken may alone remain.\*

It is admitted on all hands that the Church of Christ rests upon no earthly establishment. Planted by the Son of God Himself, it grew up, not only without the support, but in spite of the opposition of the State; and still lives, in ever-renewed

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\* Heb. xii. 26, 27.

youth, to wage its conflict with the world, centuries after the final ruin of the mighty empire that once sought its destruction.

Before appealing to considerations more immediately affecting the question before us, we would offer a few observations on the argument in favour of "Church Establishments," usually drawn from the Mosaic Institutions.

### I.—*Mosaic Institutions.*

The Lord had not left Himself "without witness" in the heathen world, even whilst suffering the nations "to walk in their own ways";\* but it was to Israel that the high privilege of a *Theocratic* Government was especially granted.† The Most High revealed Himself to that Nation both as its Deliverer and its King. He was at once the Object of worship and the Fountain of law. Had that age been prepared to realise the high conception proposed in the Theocracy, the Church and the State would have been co-extensive and correlative expressions of a most glorious and blessed fact. In the words, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation" (Exodus xix. 6), we recognise the high calling of Israel.

But it was soon apparent that the nation was not "a kingdom of priests." The people disclaimed the glorious privilege of immediate access to their Heavenly King; and, by their acts of open treason and rebellion against Him, proved themselves unworthy of the privileges to which He had called them. Long was the course of training, preparatory to the full manifestation of the kingdom of God, through which

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\* Acts xiv. 16, 17.

† It is noteworthy that even the wealth of the Greek language, as moulded by Heathenism, could supply Josephus with no term adequately descriptive of the constitution of his own people. He almost apologises for introducing the new word "*Theocracy*." Joseph. cont. Apion. lib. ii. c. 16, ed. Huds.



Israel had to pass. The discipline of the law was needed; but it was as a "schoolmaster to bring unto Christ."\*

It is not the place here to enlarge upon the sacred meaning which, according to the inspired teaching of the New Testament, was veiled under the sacrifices and the service of the tabernacle and the temple. Pointing to Christ, and testifying of Him, in Him they were at once ended and fulfilled. The glorious promise of the New Covenant "made the first Covenant old."† In so far as it was ceremonial and typical, it was a temporary system; and it can furnish no precedent for the imitation of the Church now, when the type has served its purpose, and has been displaced by the substance which it prefigured. And yet there are marks even in this preparatory dispensation that command our attention.

*First.*—The arrangement as to Tithes was one specially adapted to the peculiar circumstances of Israel. The whole land of Canaan was allotted to the people of Israel, under the authority of God Himself, as a free donation from Him. Hence the Tithe is emphatically declared to be His,‡ and is treated as a reservation set apart for his peculiar service. It was appropriated to those members of the nation who, having Him for their inheritance, were excluded from otherwise sharing in the allotment of the land.§ But let it be observed that there is in the Old Testament *a remarkable absence of any distinct provision for the compulsory enforcement of the payment of tithes.* All appears to have rested on the *conscience* of the Tithe-payer.|| The great principle that the service of man to his Maker should be free and uncompelled, with which the State must not interfere, appears yet more strikingly on the occasions of the rearing of the tabernacle and of the temple. On each

\* Compare Exod. xx. 19, 20; xxxii.—xxxiv. Ezek. xx. 25, 26. 2 Cor. iii. 7—9. Gal. iii. 24.

† Jer. xxxi. 32; Heb. viii. 7—13.

‡ Levit. xxvii. 30.

§ Numb. xviii. 20—24.

|| See Deut. xxvi. 12—15.

of these solemnities the offerings from the tribes were "free-will" offerings.\* The idea of a compulsory tax seems not to have entered into the mind either of David or of Solomon, far less into that of Moses. Under that dispensation, it was not imagined, even in an Oriental Court, that forced payments, or legally-exacted sacrifices, befitted the service of Him who looked for the worship of the heart. "The people rejoiced for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly unto the Lord, and David the king also rejoiced with great joy." (1 Chron. xxix. 9.)

*Secondly.*—The organisation of the Jewish Church bore evidence of its Divine and intrinsically spiritual nature, by admitting alongside of the priesthood a free development of the prophetic order. This was, doubtless, an essential part of the Divine arrangements. The great utterance of Moses to Joshua remains a standing reproof to all who would limit the freeness of the Spirit's work. "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!"† Like the Judges, but in a yet higher degree, the Prophets bore witness to the immediate presence of the Spirit of God in the Church. They were limited to no particular tribe, family, or sex. If Samuel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, were of the tribe of Levi, the great prophets Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, Hosea, and Amos, proclaim the working of the same free Spirit amongst other tribes, of whom no mention is made as regards the Priesthood. Whilst Miriam, Hannah, Deborah, and Huldah, bear an emphatic testimony to the oneness of man's spiritual nature, and that the Most High freely vouchsafes the gifts of his Spirit to the handmaid as well as to the servant.

It was through the prophets, in an especial manner, that a continued testimony was maintained in the Jewish Church against idolatry, worldliness, and corruption. Through

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\* Exod. xxxvi. 3—6. 1 Chron. xxix. 5—9.

† Numb. xi. 29.

them the deep things of the Law, the significance of the types, and the spiritual blessings of *His* kingdom who was to suffer in order that He might reign, were more and more revealed; and the Christian who now reads the Old Testament in the light of the New may clearly trace the true course of Divine progress in these things—a progress, *not from the substance to the shadow*, but from the type to the Antitype, from the carnal to the spiritual, from earth to heaven.

## II.—*Founding of the Christian Church.*

“The fulness of time” was accomplished.\* The work of preparation was ended. “The Word was made flesh.” In a life of spotless righteousness; in all the ministries of unwearied compassion and love; in suffering, in shame, and in death, His glory was revealed, “the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth.”† The King was come, “just and having salvation.”‡ How easy would it have been for Him, to whom “all power was given in Heaven and in Earth,” to have founded his Church by assuming the empire of the world. But—and how significant is the fact—He refused in this manner to assert His power, or so to establish his kingdom in the earth.

Not only had the Christian Church in its origin no connection with the State, but such a connection is *expressly disclaimed* by its Divine founder. “My kingdom,” are his emphatic words, “is not of this world.”§ To the same effect He declares to his immediate followers, “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you.”|| As the King in whom the righteousness of the Law was fulfilled, He set aside the ancient polity and worship of the Jews, but not for the purpose of establishing

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\* Gal. iv. 4.

† John i. 14.

‡ Zech. ix. 9.

§ John xviii. 36.

|| Matt. xx. 25, 26; Lu. xxii. 25, 26.

any new *national* polity, or *national* religion. Men, indeed, were to come under his yoke, but as a spiritual yoke. The religion of Jesus was not limited to the Jew or the Gentile, but was, from the very first, designed to embrace the world.

For three hundred years, in that critical period of its existence in which, if at all, external support might seem most necessary, the Christian Church was not only without any national existence, but was emphatically opposed to an exclusively national spirit; a witness to a cold and hostile world of the spiritual presence and sustaining love of Him who died not for one nation only, but for all. By His power alone Christianity, unfettered by alliances with the Governments of this world, struck its roots so deeply, and spread them so widely, as to acquire an imperishable hold upon the nations of the earth. It was then that the noble words were uttered, "Unam omnium rempublicam agnoscimus—mundum."\*

The idea of a national Church established by law was wholly foreign to the conceptions of the Christians of the first three centuries. With them Cæsar ruled in another sphere, and had no authority, as Cæsar, in the kingdom of Christ. Christianity was, from its origin, a *spiritual* dispensation—a religion of the heart, unrestricted by the boundaries or the prejudices of race or nation, and needing no support from earthly power and penalties.

Again, both in the foundation and in the development of the Church and polity of Israel, we find abundant evidence of the Divine Presence and Government. The great acts that mark the progress of the Hebrew Church are the Divinely-regulated acts of spiritual men. But how little is this feature apparent in the conduct of those who have been the principal abettors of State interference in the Christian Church! We turn to the Emperor Constantine as the first who gave a practical illustration of this interference. What is there in his character or career to sanction such an inno-

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\* Tertulliani Apolog. c. 38.

vation upon the principles of the New Testament? A successful soldier, a half-heathen, half-Christian autocrat, the murderer of his son, and, perhaps, also of his wife, after summoning and presiding over an assembly of bishops in the council of Nicæa, he postponed, from motives either of policy or of superstition, his final adoption of the Christian profession to the last moments of his life. "Great," as he may be called, if measured simply by the energy of purpose which, after a lapse of more than fifteen centuries, has still left its impress upon the external condition of the Church, he was a man in whom, like the empire which he ruled, the admixture of the "iron" with the "miry clay" has rendered him, what he will probably ever remain, one of the unsolved enigmas of history.\* As regards the results of his policy, to adopt the candid admission of a late distinguished historian, "the reign of Constantine bears witness that the State which seeks to advance Christianity by the worldly means at its command, may be the occasion of more injury to this holy cause than the earthly power which opposes it with whatever virulence."†

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\* See Gibb. ch. 18 and 20; and the Sixth Lecture of Dean Stanley on the "Eastern Church." Niebuhr, in his lectures on the History of Rome, thus sums up the character of Constantine:—"His motives in establishing the Christian religion were something very strange indeed. His religion must have been a rare jumble. On his coins he has 'Soli Invicto'; he worships pagan deities, consults the *haruspices*, holds heathen superstitions; and yet he shuts up the temples and builds churches. As the President of the Nicene Council, we can only look upon him with disgust: he was himself no Christian at all, and he would only be baptised *in articulo mortis*. He had taken up the Christian faith as a superstition, which he mingled with all his other superstitions. When, therefore, Eastern writers speak of him as an *ισαπόστολος*, they know not what they are saying; and to call him a saint is a profanation of the word."—Niebuhr's Lect. iii. 303. Bohn's ed.

† Neander's Church History, vol. iii. p. 41, Clarke's Edition. The italics are his own.

III.—*Introduction of "Church Establishments."*

Nor does the character of the age in which the professing Church accepted an alliance with the State increase our confidence.

1.—More than three centuries of despotism had accustomed the Roman world to look upon the functions of Sovereign Pontiff ("Pontifex Maximus") with which, since the time of Augustus, the emperors had been regularly invested, as inseparable from the imperial prerogative. These functions included the supreme control of the religion of the State. They had been assumed by Constantine as a matter of course; and, notwithstanding the profession of Christianity, the title was continued by at least six of his immediate successors.\* Thus both princes and people had become habituated to State interference in religious things; and even Christians, yielding to the seductive influences around them, were ready to accept it, in their own favour; too little reflecting that such an interference was *essentially heathenish*, and altogether at variance with the true spirit of the Gospel. But this was not the only feature that marked the growing degeneracy of the Church.

2.—The simple piety of Apostolic Christianity had hal- lowed and ennobled the plain duties of domestic and ordinary life. Marriage, and all the holy relations which spring from it, had received a fresh consecration. But in the age of Constantine and Theodosius a vitiated doctrinal system presumed to discredit that which God had sanctified. The blessed relations of husband, of wife, of parent, were treated as of little account by multitudes who were taught to prefer the so-called angelic virtues of the monk or the nun. Religious excitement expended itself upon monastic seclusion and uncommanded austerities. Men vainly sought the victory over self by fleeing from the appointed conflict with

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\* Gibb. ch. xxi. sub. fin. vol iii. p. 409, ed. 1802.

the world. A false standard of holiness was set up; and, as a natural consequence, the pursuit of imaginary virtues threw into the shade the practice of ordinary duties. Veneration for the relics of martyrs quickly led the way to an estimate of their character, and of the efficacy of their intercession, altogether opposed to the testimony of Holy Scripture. Ceremonies multiplied apace; insomuch that even Augustine, overflowing as he was with that love which "endureth all things," was constrained to write to his friend Januarius: "With servile burdens they so oppress our very religion, which God of his mercy would have to be free under very few and most manifest sacraments of Divine service, that the state of the Jews is much more tolerable [than the state of the Church of Christ]." \* If, according to a late eminent writer, who has collected a mass of evidence upon the subject, the prevailing infatuation in favour of celibacy and asceticism be enough to fix "the Brand of Apostasy" upon the Church of the fourth century, how, it may be asked, shall we be safe in keeping up, without question, ecclesiastical systems based to so large an extent upon corrupt maxims then current? † How, indeed, can we accept that as a model Church, of which Chrysostom complains—contrasting it with the simplicity of the Apostolic age "in which the Spirit of God ordered all things?" "But now," he proceeds to say, "we have scarcely the steps and tokens of these things. The Church now may be likened to

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\* Augustini Epistol. 119. Opera, vol. ii. fol. 576. Ed. Erasm. See Jewell's "Defence of the Apology," p. 292. Ed. 1611.

† "I appeal to serious and candid minds, competently informed in Church History, and ask whether the BRAND OF APOSTASY be not herein fixed by the Apostolic hand upon the Nicene Church."—Isaac Taylor, "Ancient Christianity," vol. i. p. 310. The capitals are those of the author. See 1 Tim. iv. 1—4. Neander, in his chapter on Monasticism, (Church History, vol. iii. p. 322 *seq.*), does ample justice to the *Christian leaven* which worked in the midst of asceticism, in spite of the fearful evils incident to the system.

a woman that hath lost her old modesty, and that beareth only certain badges and tokens of her former felicity; and that, being utterly bereft of the treasures, keepeth only the cases and boxes of the precious things she had before. To such a woman the Church this day may be likened.”\*

The apostle Paul early foresaw that “some should depart from the faith:” he assures the primitive believers that “the mystery of iniquity was already working,” and warns the elders at Ephesus that from among their own selves should men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.† In the face of these solemn intimations we are not to be surprised at the appearance, very early, of the tares amongst the wheat; nor can we accept as Divine any testimony, how venerable soever, from succeeding ages which fails to harmonise with the plain teaching of the New Testament—the great and abiding record of “the truth as it in Jesus.” Upon the full reception of this truth, and upon the acting out of its requirements in a holy life, under the operation of the Spirit of God, must ever depend the vitality of the Church. From age to age it has pleased the Lord, in his mercy, to raise up witnesses to its living power. And it is consolatory as well as instructive, to mark this truth still, amidst prevailing corruption, triumphantly vindicating its Divine character and its exclusive claim to our allegiance; and to note the evidence continually accumulating that all decay and deadness in the Church, with their attendant evils, have been the result not of a humble, self-denying walk in accordance with its dictates, but of a *departure from it*. Tried by the standard of the New Testament, we are surely not mistaken in pointing to the era of ecclesiastical

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\* Chrysost. Homil. 36 on 1 Cor. xiv. 30, Opera, tom. iii. pp. 486, 487, Ed. Savil. We have availed ourselves of Bishop Jewell’s vigorous English in the translation. The words seem to have made a deep impression upon him, as he quotes them more than once; “Defence of the Apology,” pp. 31 and 399.

† 1 Tim. v. 1—3. 2 Thess. ii. 7. Acts xx. 30.



establishments in the age of Constantine and Theodosius, as an era of grievous and increasing departure. And "if," to use the words of Jewell, "the form of the Church were so much altered in Chrysostom's days, what may we then think of the times of darkness that have followed?"\*

#### IV.—*Contrast between Primitive Christianity and the Age of Church "Establishments."*

It would be impossible, within the limits of these pages, to do more than briefly hint at a few points—

I.—According to the teaching of the New Testament the Lord Jesus Christ is the one Sacrifice for sin, the one Mediator between God and man. Through Him all believers have the same privilege of free access by one Spirit unto the Father; and all are made to partake of the one Spirit. None can offer up his brother's heart; neither can any man or order of men worship or mediate for the rest. Hence the words applied in the New Testament to Christian ministers have no reference either to sacrifice or to priestly mediation. Except in its obvious use as regards the sacrificing priests of the Jews or the heathen, the term "priest" is there exclusively appropriated either in the highest sense to Christ Himself, or in a figurative sense to his people prepared by his redeeming love to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Him. "*The sacerdotal title is never once conferred upon Christian ministers. The only priests under the Gospel, designated as such in the New Testament, are the saints, the members of the Christian brotherhood. As individuals, all Christians are priests alike.*" †

Beautiful is the idea of the Christian congregation presented to us in the New Testament, in epistles, let it be remembered,

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\* "Defence of the Apology," p. 31.

† Professor Lightfoot on the Epistle to the Philippians, pp. 182, 183.

addressed by the Apostle Paul to four of the most important primitive Churches—at *Corinth*, at *Ephesus*, at *Thessalonica*, and at *Rome*. The whole congregation is, according to the Apostle, “the body of Christ,” “drinking into one Spirit,” and, through that Spirit, enjoying union and fellowship with Christ “the Head.” The gifts of the Spirit are, in his view, a pledge of the presence and love of the risen Lord. They were “diverse,” and no one member monopolised either the possession, or the exercise of them. The “prophetic gift,” which is defined as the ability conferred by the Spirit “to speak to men to edification and exhortation and comfort,” is commended by the apostle as a gift to be especially desired.\* He expressly declares that “all might prophecy one by one,” that all might “learn, and that all might be comforted.” This hallowed liberty is, in his mind, in no wise inconsistent with the “decency and order” which he, at the same time, inculcates. Whilst every gift was to be “proved,” the Spirit was not to be quenched, nor “prophesying” despised.†

Now it must be admitted that, in order fully to realise the above conception, the congregation, or, at least, the spiritual members of it, including in an especial manner the ministers, must be preserved in a *true dependence upon Christ alone*. In proportion as this is lacking, the “decency” and “order” will be disturbed. Justin Martyr, in the middle of the second century, is an important witness to the recognition in the Church, down to his own day, of spiritual gifts “both in men and women.” He speaks of the continued possession by the Church of the “prophetic gift,” as a standing testimony to the fulfilment of the ancient evangelical promises, and an

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\* 1 Cor. xiv. 1, 3.

† For the above statement see 1 Cor. xii.-xiv; Eph. iv. 4-12; 1 Thess. v. 19-21; Rom. xii. 1-8, with the concurring testimony of the Apostle Peter, 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11. In the Church at Antioch there were both “prophets” and teachers. Ac. xiii. 1. Judas and Silas were “prophets.” Ac. xv. 32. The Apostle Paul was a guest at Cæsarea in a house where the “four daughters” all “prophesied.” Ac. xxi. 8, 9.

evidence of the abiding presence of the Spirit that inspired them.\* According to a still later writer, quoted by Eusebius, "the apostle shows that the gift of prophecy should be in every church until the final coming [of the Lord]."† Intimations of "the liberty of prophesying" appear in the works of Irenæus, and of several other writers down to the beginning of the third century;‡ from which period the traces of its existence become more and more indistinct; and it has been generally assumed (but with what "warrant of Holy Scripture" still remains to be proved), that the prophetic gift, as exercised under the direct sanction of the Apostles, has been superseded by the "ordinary" exercises of study or learning.§ But has the effect upon the Church of the practical suppression or disuse of so important a gift been sufficiently considered? Noiseless as may have been the change produced, it cannot have been the less certain. From week to week the congregations assembled. Services, of which, as must be confessed, there are few, if any, distinct traces in the New Testament, but which have been ascribed, with an appearance of probability, to an imitation of the usages of the Jewish Synagogue, and which are distinctly referred to by writers of the second and third centuries,|| appear to have assumed more and more of a regular form. The preaching of the Gospel, originally powerful in its simplicity through the "demonstration of the Spirit," seems to have become more and more confined to the stated utterances of the Bishop or Presbyter; which in their turn gradually became

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\* Justin Martyr, Dial. with Tryph. §§ 82, 87, and 88, where he says, "It is plain to be seen that there are amongst us *both men and women* who have received gifts from the Spirit of God."

† Euseb. Eccles. Hist. lib. v. c. 17.

‡ See Irenæ. Adv. Hæres. lib. ii. c. 32, § 4. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. c. 27, lib. v. c. 17, 18.

§ See Mosheim de rebus Christianis ante Constant. pp. 130, 131.

|| Justin Martyr, Apol. i. c. 67; Tertull. Apolog. c. 39.

more rhetorical in their character, and more and more dependent upon the exercise of human learning or skill.\*

Can we be mistaken in believing that under these altered circumstances the dependence of the people upon their risen and living Lord became, imperceptibly, it may be, yet surely, exchanged for a dependence upon those who were placed over them as ministers? If no direct evidence of this can be adduced, it is, at least, a striking fact that *the age in which the "prophetic gift" is supposed to have ceased, is the age in which the Bishops and Presbyters began to assume that new relation to the congregation which ere long raised them from the humble position of "servants" or "pastors," to that of "priests" and "mediators."*† The change must not be ascribed to them alone. *The people also had their part in it.* In proportion as the dependence of the members of the congregation failed to be placed upon Christ alone, they lost, through unfaithfulness, that life in which alone they could have dominion over the world, and abdicated the functions of the heavenly priesthood to which each was called. Those functions became more and more confined to a select circle; so that in the third century the

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\* Origen (Comment. in Roman : lib. ix. c. 2, vol. 7, p. 292, ed. Lommatzsch) has some striking observations upon the contrast between the exercises of human wisdom then becoming common, heard with "great applause," but with little fruit of conviction or faith; and the simple and unpremeditated utterances of those who spoke "according to the grace given them," which were often made powerful to the conversion of unbelievers and the arousing of the careless. So greatly had the practice of going to *bear*, rather than to *worship*, increased in Chrysostom's time, that we find him often sharply reproofing the tumultuous clapping of hands and other tokens of applause that interrupted his preaching. See Neander's Life of Chrys. pp. 255-257.

† The expression "Priest" is frequently used by Tertullian and subsequent writers. How far the sacerdotal ideas were carried a little later may be seen in the work called the "Apostolical Constitutions," *passim*. See, for example, lib. ii. c. 26, where the bishop is styled "Mediator with God," an "Earthly God after God," &c.

very word which had been applied by the Apostle Peter to the whole congregation, as “the heritage”\* of the Lord, became exclusively appropriated to those engaged in the public work of the ministry. Just as in a later period, as the idea gained ground of the peculiar sacredness of the ascetic life, the very “clergy” themselves were divided between the “secular” and the “religious.” The phrase “entering the Priestly order” began to be appropriated to the assumption of the clerical function. The people were more and more excluded from their part in the work and government of the Church. That which even Cyprian, in the middle of the third century, speaks of as a matter of course, the presence of the people (either “assisting” or “consenting”), in all important deliberations, gradually ceased; though for centuries no bishop was chosen without the popular voice, and no bishop, after he was chosen, could do anything of importance without the consent of his presbytery.†

2.—In words of Divine majesty the Son of God proclaims *Spirituality* and *Truth* the essential characteristics of the worship of the New Covenant. “The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him *must* worship Him in spirit and in truth.”‡ “Without altars, without temples, without images;”—such were the features which the religious assemblies of the early Church presented to the world around them.§ Some of the noblest remains of Christian eloquence are vindications of this simplicity against the scoffs of the heathen. Origen, in a memorable passage of his treatise against Celsus, rises above himself as he contrasts the gaudy pomp of untruth in the idol temple, with the humble, sincere, and as yet unadorned

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\* 1 Pet. v. 3.

† Concil. Carthag. iv. can. 22, 23.

‡ John iv. 21, 24.

§ Minucii Felicis, Octavius, §§ 10, 32, pp. 61, 160, ed. Davis.

worship of the Church; the lifeless and perishing images of Phidias and Polycletus, with the living and enduring realities of the new creation, wrought in believers by the Spirit of God.\* As sacerdotal ideas entered in, this ancient simplicity disappeared. The common meal in which the early believers had united in commemorating the Saviour's love became a *sacrifice*, though, for ages, only a *spiritual sacrifice*;—the table became an *altar*—the ministers, *priests*—the simple meeting-house, or “upper room,” a stately temple. Already, in the beginning of the third century, we are met by the undisguised appeal of Tertullian to an extra-scriptural tradition, in support of practices even then current, for which no Scripture could be pleaded.† The century did not close without leaving behind it what has been justly styled “a vast increase of ceremonial in the Church.”‡ The reign of Constantine gave a fatal stimulus to these tendencies. In glaring contrast with the Saviour's words—who, in consecrating the worship of the heart, had for ever abolished the special sanctity of place—the first professedly Christian Emperor erected with great magnificence, a Christian “temple,” on the supposed site of the Lord's sepulchre. Under the auspices of himself and of his aged mother Helena, a new, if not the first, impulse was given to the search after relics, by the alleged discovery of the cross of wood on which the Saviour had died.§ This quickly led to an almost incredible multiplication of similar incidents, and ultimately to a veneration for the dead, and for images, not easily, if at all, distinguishable from actual worship. How true and suggestive is Jerome's description of the Church which he saw around him! “Greater in power and wealth,

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\* Origen contra Celsum, lib. viii. c. 17-19, p. 389, ed. Spenc.

† Tertull. de Coronâ Militis. c. 3.

‡ Dr. Swainson, “The Nicene and Apostles' Creeds,” p. 42.

§ See the authorities in the Second Volume of Isaac Taylor's “Ancient Christianity,” p. 277, *seqq.*

but with less of virtue, since it came under the influence of Christian princes."\*

Here we might pass on, did not the tendencies of our own times invite another observation. Under the influences that were every day becoming more prevalent, it need not be surprising that the primitive singing "with the Spirit"—the true "melody of the heart" sanctified for praise, should, about the middle of the third century, give place to the regular choir; and still later, to the stately chaunt of Ambrose, or of Gregory. But it is very remarkable how long the ideas of a purer age maintained the protest of the Apostolic Church against mingling the sounds of instruments without life, with the worship of the living God. It is a fact to which we would invite the serious attention of our fellow-Christians, that for *more than twelve hundred years* this primitive testimony precluded the use of organs in public worship. Thus speaks Thomas Aquinas, writing about the year 1250, as quoted by the accurate Bingham:—"The Church does not use musical instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize."†

\* Vita Malchi, Hieronymi Opera, vol. ii. 41, ed. Vallarsii.

† Aquin. Summa, Secunda Secundæ, Quæst. 91. Artic. 2, par. 4. Bingham's Antiq. 315; where note particularly the testimony of Chrysostom—"It" (instrumental music) "was only permitted to the Jews for the heaviness and grossness of their souls; God condescended to their weakness, because they were lately drawn off from idols." "Theodoret," continues Bingham, "has many the like expressions in his comments upon the Psalms and other places." Compare the testimony of William Thorpe (about the year 1407), in 1 Wordsworth's Eccles. Biography, 169—172, and what the late Dr. Wordsworth there quotes from Lewis's Wyclyffe, pp. 132—135, as said "very beautifully" by Wyclyffe on worldly singing in public worship: "And if they seyn that Angels praise God by song in Heaven; seye that we kunnen (know) not that song; but they ben in full victory of their enemies, and we ben in perilous battle, and in the valley of

It is our privilege to recognize all who in every age have by their fruits proved themselves members of the universal Church—how much soever they may have been under bondage to false systems. But whilst the servants are to be honoured in their places, they are not to be set up above their Lord. And we cannot close our eyes to the fact that, from the third century downwards, the retrograde tendency of man's fallen nature is to be traced in the growth of sacerdotal assumption, in the increasing pomp of ceremony, in the multiplication of rites, in the false estimate of the outward and ceremonial, and in the prevailing reliance upon the efficacy of self-imposed services. The divine salt of the truth gradually lost its savour as it mingled with the earth. In obtaining a secular ascendancy, the Church became leavened, and, in so far as it was leavened, enfeebled and corrupted by the spirit of the world. Slow, yet continued, was the decline of the heavenly life, and with this decline no less certain the backward movement from the Antitype to the type, from the spiritual to the ritual, from Christ to man.

3.—How suggestive is the fact that the expression "*reading, or saying, prayers,*" to which modern usage has familiarized so many, is not to be found in Holy Scripture, with all its wealth of words to convey religious thought. Prayer—that act which, of all others, ought to be the free communion of man with his Maker, the expression at once of the feeblest cry for life, and of the deepest wants of the soul—was, in the early ages of the Church, unrestricted, even in the congregation, to any form of words. The language of Tertullian in the beginning of the third century is express, "We pray *without a prompter*, because from the heart."\*

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weeping and mourning; and our song letteth us fro better occupation, and stirreth us to many great sins, and to forget ourselves."—I Wordsworth's Eccles. Biog. p. 171.

\* "Denique sine monitore, quia de pectore oramus."—Tertulliani Apologet. c. 30. So Justin Martyr, fifty years earlier, describes the presiding minister of the congregation as praying "according to his



The origin of public liturgies is involved in great obscurity, but it is agreed on all hands that their introduction was very gradual ; and, even in districts where usage had settled into uniformity in the use of the same liturgy, it was long before *all* public extemporary prayer was excluded. Even then a certain latitude was allowed at the discretion of the "ordinary." And, so far as England was concerned, it was not until the reigns of Edward the Sixth and Queen Elizabeth that an absolute uniformity in public prayer was adopted. Ages after liturgies had been introduced, "the use of York," "the use of Sarum," "the uses of Hereford and Bangor," remained to attest the primitive liberty which the bishops had themselves enjoyed in their particular jurisdictions.\*

4.—The Apostle Paul from his own example, and from the words of the Lord Jesus, urged upon the bishops or presbyters of the Church at Ephesus the importance of providing from their own labour for the wants of themselves and of "the weak" around them.† Instances occur even in the

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ability." *Ὁση δύναμις αὐτῶ.*—Justin Martyr, Apol. i. c. 68, p. 270. Ed. Otto. See Lord Chancellor King's Observations, "Primitive Church," part ii. pp. 34—37. Compare Rom. viii. 26, 27 ; 1 Pet. iv. 11. Lord King largely proves that "the primitive Christians had no stinted Liturgies, or imposed forms of prayer"—p. 33. See also 4 Bunsen's Hippolytus, 152, and 221—225.

\* Augustine, in an instructive epistle (Epist. 118, Opera, vol. ii. fol. 556, Ed. Erasmi), sufficiently indicates the absence of uniformity in his day. Compare Socrates, Eccles. Hist. lib. ii. c. 22. "Every Church," says Bingham, "was at liberty to make choice for herself, in what method and form of words she would perform these things ; and it was no breach of unity for different Churches to have different modes, and circumstances, and ceremonies." Antiq. book xvi., ch. i., § 5, par. 2, p. 864, Ed. Bohn. "The rites of the Churches throughout the British Empire *were not by any means uniform at the middle of the sixteenth century.*"—Palmer's Origines Liturgicæ, vol i. p. 189.

† Acts. xx. 33-35. The observations of Baumgarten on this important passage deserve our thoughtful attention : "The Church of Christ

fourth and fifth centuries of bishops being engaged in trade ;\* and ages passed away before it was supposed that secular occupations which had been consecrated by the example of the Lord and his apostles were incompatible with the duties or the character of the Christian minister. Justin Martyr in the second century, and Tertullian in the beginning of the third,† speak of the offerings of the faithful, and of their application to the wants of the sick and the destitute, the widows and the orphans, and the Christians in prison or in exile. But neither of these writers speaks of any allowances to the ministers. It is true that about fifty years later, in the age of Cyprian, who had given up his own patrimony to the poor of the Church, we find traces of such an allowance. But even then, and for centuries later, *all was free*. The words of Tertullian speak the voice of the Universal Church in the West until at least the sixth or the seventh century, and in the East down to our own day : “Nemo compellitur ; sed spontè confert.”—“No one is compelled to give ; but each contributes freely.” ‡

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in the midst of the world of the Gentiles will only fulfil its appointed task by remaining faithful to this fundamental law of their Apostle of giving without receiving. By this alone can it attain to a firm and independent existence from which it will be enabled to chastise, to move, to heal, and to improve the world.”—Baumgarten’s *Apostolic History*, vol. ii. p. 380.

\* Bing. *Antiq. Christian Church*. Book vi. c. 4, § 13, p. 227.

† Justin Martyr, *Apolog.* I. c. 67 ; Tertulliani *Apolog.* c. 39.

‡ Tertull. *Apologet.* c. 39. Comp. Irenæus *Adv. Hæres.* ii. c. 32, § 4. Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* iii. c. 26. Tatian *ad Græcos*, § 50. † Lingard’s *Anglo-Saxon Church*, 181-183. See the very curious letter of the martyr Apollonius (A.D. 180-190) quoted by Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.* lib. v. c. 18, in which he proposes the following as a test whereby to distinguish the false from the true prophet—“Does it not appear to thee that *the Scripture forbids any prophet to receive gifts and money?* When, therefore, I see a *prophetess* receiving both gold and silver and precious garments, how can I fail to reject her ?” And, again, towards the end—“If they deny that their prophets took presents, *let them at least acknow-*

In thus alluding to known facts in connection with the early Church, it must not be understood that we have overlooked 1 Cor. ix. 14, Gal. vi. 6, or are indifferent to the duties therein involved. One of the most distinguished amongst modern Church historians treats these passages as especially applicable to "travelling preachers," adding—"It cannot be hence inferred that the case was the same with those who held church offices in distinct communities."\* But whatever view may be taken of their meaning, it is plain that the true principle lies, not in a disregard of the Apostle's exhortation to the bishops or presbyters of the Church at Ephesus, but in a course of practice in accordance with his entire teaching. "We freely acknowledge," says Barclay, writing in the year 1675, "that there is an obligation upon such to whom God sends, or among whom He raiseth up a minister, that (if need be) they minister unto his necessities. Secondly: That it is lawful for him to receive what is necessary and convenient." And, after referring to Gal. vi. 6, 1 Cor. ix. 11-14, and 1 Tim. v. 16, and to the case of the Levites under the Law, he continues—"Christ, when He sent forth his Apostles, said: Freely ye have received, freely give—Matt. x. 8; and they had liberty to receive meat and drink from such as offered them to supply their need. Which shows that they were not to seek or require anything by force, or to stint, or make a bargain beforehand. . . . But on the contrary, these were to do their duty, and freely to communicate, as the Lord should order them, what they had received, without seeking or expecting a reward."†

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*ledge, that if they should be proved to have received them, they are no prophets."* As regards the Eastern Church, see Paolo Sarpi, Ecclesiastical Benefices, c. 11, p. 38, and Dean Stanley's "Eastern Church, pp. 44 and 336, 367.

\* 1 Neander's Church Hist. 269.

† Barclay's Apology, p. 221. Ed. 1678.

*V.—Present Aspect of the Question.*

With regard to the bearing of the foregoing on the position of Churches established by law, we may conclude with a few observations.

We accept, with thanksgiving unto God, all that glorious result which, in his great mercy and goodness, was brought about at the period known as the Reformation—the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the vulgar tongue; the presenting of them to the free perusal and reverent acceptance of the people; and the awakening of multitudes to the reception of many of the most important doctrines of the Gospel, more especially those of the all-availing efficacy of the sufferings and death upon the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of his sole mediation and intercession with the Father.

We desire no change in the interests of Party; but, in the high and sacred interests of spiritual, primitive Christianity, we would invite Christians everywhere to consider whether the time has not come for the termination, in a manner accordant with the requirements of justice and Christian wisdom, of arrangements, how ancient soever, by which ecclesiastical systems in connection with the State are kept on foot, for which it is impossible fairly to plead either Divine institution or Apostolic practice or allowance.

We freely recognise the blessings which, in the over-ruling providence of God, have been granted to multitudes under the administration of "Established" Churches. But let it be remembered that such a blessing is no conclusive evidence of their conformity to His will. The genius of Pascal, the sanctity of Fénelon, the zeal of Xavier, give no sanction to the errors or corruptions of Rome. Nor do the learning of Jewell, Hooker, or Beveridge, the piety and talents of Ridley or Taylor, or the holiness of Ken or Wilson, set the seal of Divine approbation upon the establishment of Protestant Churches by human law.

We would respectfully invite attention to the following considerations:—

*First.*—Millions of those who, as fellow-subjects of the same commonwealth, have equal rights with the professed members of Church Establishments, conscientiously dissent from such Establishments, and their right to dissent is now in the most enlightened countries recognised by the same law as that under which Established Churches exist.

*Secondly.*—A portion, in many places a very large portion, of the community, merely by reason of their Dissent, are excluded from privileges and positions freely open to others of their fellow-citizens who have no better claim to them; whilst the members of national establishments are trained up under the impression that *they* have a kind of exclusive inheritance in the Christianity of the State, and are, perhaps unconsciously, taught to look down upon their Dissenting fellow-citizens as, in some sort, aliens as regards the public privileges which the profession of Christianity secures.

Thus an established Church is placed, by the fact of its establishment, in a position the very opposite to that which is favourable to the development of Christian life, either in its own members or in their fellow-Christians. On the one side, it is apt to produce arrogance, self-conceit, or an absence of loving sympathy; and on the other, that irritation which petty jealousies and annoyances rarely fail to engender; whilst in each is created a spirit of mutual exclusiveness which tends to separate rather than unite those whom the same Lord and Saviour would join together in his own love.

*Thirdly.*—Whilst the influence of the Church of the Old Covenant, in connection especially with the recognised and unsuppressed testimony of the Prophets, ever tended to the holiness of the nation, can it be denied that the union between the Church and the State, wherever it exists, tends to secularise the Church of Christ, and to enfeeble its testimony to holiness and truth? In State churches we see bishops encumbered with worldly dignity, rank, and

power; the force of law given to a system of compulsory payments; and ministers placed over congregations, without any reference to their consent or concurrence. For all this long-continued usage in the most corrupt ages may perhaps be pleaded; but it is destitute of any warrant in Holy Scripture, and plainly opposed to the spirit both of the old and of the new covenant.

*Fourthly.*—In Established Churches the functions of the congregation are, to a large extent, monopolised by the “clergy,” to the great prejudice of both ministers and people. The system has a direct tendency to keep the people in a state of spiritual pupillage and dependence, and to suppress the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which, according to the plain teaching of Scripture, was to be one of the special privileges of the New Covenant. But it is not the people only who are thus restrained. In many of the Churches established by law no minister is at liberty, whatever be his position or Christian experience, or how pressing soever the emergency, to pour out his heart freely in public congregational prayer. He must pray according to a stated liturgy, or not at all.

True it is that the State may lawfully exercise authority to maintain its own ascendancy and to enforce civil obedience. But does it, therefore, follow that this authority is to be exercised to establish or enforce the ascendancy of a particular Church? In what does the true influence and ascendancy of a Christian Church consist? Is it the ascendancy of earthly dignity and power, or is it not rather that of faith and holiness, of zeal and love? Of old the Church overcame not by carnal but by spiritual weapons, and by these it must overcome now. It is by these weapons alone that Scriptural Truth—for we plead for no other—must maintain its ascendancy. And by these we are persuaded it will be far more effectually protected, and commended to the minds and consciences of the people at large, than by all the weapons which the armoury of the State can furnish.

We feel the gravity of this great question. We would

urge nothing in the spirit of contention, or from the love of change. We know well how much of wisdom is needed in every attempt to correct old institutions; and, especially in all that relates to Christianity, how necessary it is that the ground shall be cleared in the hearts of men, before either the foundation or the superstructure can be safely laid. Hence the necessity for patience, forbearance, and mutual charity, no less than for earnestness and zeal. As each is willing to be taught, all may find that they have much both to unlearn and to learn. Yet, let us not be deterred from facing the emergency by the magnitude of the issue, or the extent or importance of the consequences involved. We would especially call upon our fellow-Christians to have more faith in their risen and exalted Lord. "He loved his Church, and gave Himself for it;" and still lives to mediate and reign, that He may present it to Himself a glorious Church. Let us not doubt his continued love and power, or think any other means now necessary for the support of his truth, or for the preservation of his Church in spiritual life and vigour, than those which are warranted by the great charter of his love in the New Testament; and which, from age to age, have given so many evidences of their divine efficacy in overcoming the world.

But the great question that underlies every other in relation to the present subject, and compared with which every other must shrink into insignificance, is that which appeals to every heart, and in which all are alike interested. Are the *Christian people of every land* prepared, in right earnest, to accept the responsibilities and to take their legitimate share in the duties and privileges of the children of God? *All ought to be priests*, putting on the garment of salvation and the robe of righteousness, enjoying and exemplifying, in a holy life and conversation, the blessedness of the citizenship of heaven. The welfare of millions, for time and for eternity, is involved in the practical response to be given to this momentous question. The affirmative answer of the nation's heart and life would be the establishment of the Church indeed. But how much,

alas! is there in Churches now established, which not only does not favour, but which must be confessed to be a POSITIVE OBSTRUCTION to the full realisation, amongst the people, of the New Testament idea of the kingdom of God. Do any really imagine that, in removing the existing legal "Establishments," States would cease to be Christian? Can there be a greater fallacy? It is not the State that makes the Christian; it is rather the Christian that moulds the character of the State. So far, and so far only, as the people themselves are brought under the power of the Gospel, Christianity will rule supreme in the national Councils, and influence the administration of the law. Were this truly the case with the professors of the Christian name in every land, how much cause would there be for hope that the Churches—no longer kept at a distance from one another by State interference, but united in a true sense of their high calling in Christ Jesus—might become faithful witnesses of his power and redeeming love to the world around them, and illustrate, more than they have ever yet done, the truth and blessedness of the promise, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children. IN RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALT THOU BE ESTABLISHED."\*

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\* Isaiah liv. 13, 14.









